



# SHARK BAY

## WORLD HERITAGE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

### Meeting 22 Communiqué

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The twenty second Shark Bay World Heritage Advisory Committee meeting was held on the 1<sup>st</sup> through to 3<sup>rd</sup> of December 2024 in Gathaagudu, Shark Bay, and included additional, optional fields trips on Saturday 30 November. Having recently completed the recruitment of five new members, the Committee had in attendance eight out of ten current members which was an exciting occurrence. Members engaged with key stakeholders over the three-day meeting as well as vital government agencies.

#### FIELD TRIP

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**Faure Island:** Four Committee members undertook a field trip to Faure Island with Australian Wildlife Conservancy's (AWC) Bryony Palmer. Members were given a tour of Faure Island which brought discussion of the conservation & rehabilitation efforts, future goals and hurdles AWC faces.

**Useless Loop:** Three Committee members undertook an aerial survey across Useless Loop to inspect several unrehabilitated Shark Bay Gypsum JV closed, open cut mine sites and the Shark Bay operation by Shark Bay Resources. The survey identified landscape-scale scarring visible within the Property, impacts caused by legacy mine site environmental breaches and policy failure.

**Little Lagoon:** The Committee met with representatives from Malgana Aboriginal Corporation, the Shire of Shark Bay and the Department of Biodiversity and Attractions at Little Lagoon to discuss the concerns surrounding the conservation and protection of the multi-use/tenure site.

**South Peron:** Angela Johns from DBCA informed the Committee at a South Peron campground about DBCA's new management responsibilities. The Committee acknowledged the positive steps towards creating the National Park through Joint Management but noted concerns about resourcing.

#### **Seagrass Restoration Project:**

The Committee were invited on the 'Norwest Lady' by Liam and Greg Ridgely from Shark Bay Seagrass Restoration to view the most current deployment and success of 'snaggers' that the team has been monitoring in the last year. The timeliness of permit processes and lack of funding were discussed as major obstacles the project has encountered and continue to try to navigate.

**Monkey Mia Interpretive Centre:** Tamara Beers and Mira Vankova from DBCA presented introductory ideas of a future Interpretive Centre at Monkey Mia. The Committee were engaged and welcomed to contribute ideas and feedback for the project to encompass and showcase Shark Bay's Outstanding Universal Values.

## KEY DISCUSSION POINTS AND ACTIONS

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### Joint Management:

The Committee acknowledged the ongoing development of the **Malgana Conservation Estate Joint Management Plan**, which is being prepared by the **Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions** in partnership with the **Malgana Aboriginal Corporation**. The Committee highlighted the importance of adequate financial and human resources to support joint management outcomes.

**Action:** Advocate for increased funding to support the aspirations of the joint management framework and ensure effective protection of cultural and natural values within the SBWHA.

### Conservation Challenges:

#### Little Lagoon

The Committee discussed increasing environmental pressures on **Little Lagoon**, including impacts from vehicle access, sedimentation, and shoreline degradation. Malgana Elders expressed deep concerns about changes to the ecosystem, calling for improved protection measures.

**Action:** Support the development of an integrated management approach that engages widely with stakeholders and site users to address tenure complexities and conservation concerns.

#### Shark Bay Gypsum JV Unrehabilitated Mine Sites

Aerial surveys revealed extensive **unrehabilitated mine sites** in the vicinity of Useless Loop, raising concerns about legacy environmental impacts. The Committee agreed on the need for further stakeholder engagement to determine responsibilities and rehabilitation options.

**Action:** Engage with the **Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety** and other stakeholders to address the conservation risks posed by these sites.

#### Seagrass Restoration Project

Seagrass meadows are a key part of Shark Bay's World Heritage values, yet ongoing **seagrass decline** remains a critical issue. The Committee reviewed the **Shark Bay Seagrass Restoration Project**, which is progressing despite challenges in permit approvals and funding constraints.

**Action:** Advocate for streamlined approvals and additional funding for restoration efforts.

### Marine Management and Climate Resilience:

The Committee expressed concerns regarding the **outdated Shark Bay Marine Park Management Plan** and the impacts of the **marine heatwave event** currently affecting Western Australia. Without updated management frameworks, the resilience of marine ecosystems may be compromised.

**Action:** Urge the State Government to prioritise updating the **Marine Park Management Plan** to address emerging climate and conservation challenges.

## **STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT/UPDATES**

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The committee were informed by key government representatives on current planning activities and items of interest relevant to the World Heritage area: The Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions; the Department of the Primary Industries and Development; the Shire of Shark Bay; and the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water.

The Committee discussed opportunities to enhance recognition of Shark Bay's cultural and natural heritage, including participation in the **2025 WA State Heritage Conference**. This event will feature a plenary session on **World Heritage properties** and the **recognition of cultural values** in sites originally listed for natural criteria.

**Action:** Work collaboratively to support a unified approach in recognising Indigenous cultural values within Shark Bay's World Heritage framework.

### **Recommendations**

1. **Resourcing:** Secure increased funding and staffing to support the effective management of the SBWHA, particularly for joint management, marine conservation, and seagrass restoration.
2. **Heritage Protection:** Advance rehabilitation efforts for legacy mine sites and address vehicle impacts on sensitive environments.
3. **Policy and Planning:** Expedite updates to the Marine Park Management Plan to reflect current conservation needs and climate resilience strategies.
4. **Cultural Heritage Recognition:** Strengthen Indigenous engagement and advocacy for formal recognition of cultural values within the SBWHA.
5. **Stakeholder Collaboration:** Continue cross-sector collaboration to ensure World Heritage values are maintained for future generations.

The Shark Bay World Heritage Advisory Committee remains committed to protecting and promoting the World Heritage values of Gutharraguda (Shark Bay) and will continue to provide guidance to all levels of government, stakeholders, and the community.

# PROTECTED

ATTENDANCE	
Committee Members	Government Presenters
Juliane Bush Anthony Bellottie Dr David Newsome Prof. Gary Kendrick Jane Blennerhassett Stacy Blane Dr Gary Jackson Eleanor Ridley	Anthony Desmond (DBCA) A/District Manager Abby Leyendekkers (DBCA) Marine Park Coordinator Michelle Harrison (DBCA) Heritage Policy Officer Angela Johns (DBCA) A/Parks and Visitor Services Coordinator Clare Atkins (DBCA) Joint Management Planner Ben Wiesner (DCCEEW) Heritage Policy Officer Matt Clarke (DPIRD) Supervising Fisheries & Marine Officer Dale Chapman (Shark Bay Shire) CEO Mira Vankova (DBCA) Business Manager, Monkey Mia Tamara Beers (DBCA) Communication Designer <hr/> <i>Executive Support: (DBCA) Julia Fenny</i>

## NEXT MEETING

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Meeting 23 is scheduled in Denham for Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> of May 2025

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

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The Committee wish to thank the following presenters, hosts, and guests for making the 22<sup>nd</sup> SBWHAC meeting a success:

Catering: RAC Monkey Mia Resort, Heritage Resort, Ocean Park Restaurant, The Old Pearler  
Presenters & Observers: Shark Bay Seagrass Restoration Project Liam & Greg Ridgley  
Australian Wildlife Conservancy Bryony Palmer  
Malgana Aboriginal Corporation Dennis & Bobby Hoult

## Contact

The Committee welcomes community and stakeholder engagement. Contact the Chair C/O Alicja Szczepanska, Executive Officer, Shark Bay World Heritage Advisory Committee.  
sbwhac@dbca.wa.gov.au or (08) 9948 2210

## Juliane Bush

Chair, Shark Bay World Heritage Advisory Committee  
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